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THE DARKNESS
DARKCHYLDE
$4.99
US

The Darkness – Darkchylde: Kingdom Pain

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DEDICATED IN LOVING MEMORY
To my mother Debbie Queen, who encouraged me to create art.

Special Thanks To: Matt Hawkins, Filip Sablik, & Phil Smith, some of the best we've ever worked with. Here's to the future.

The Darkness created by Marc Silvestri, Garth Ennis, & David Wohl.
Darkchylde & Starfall created by Randy Queen

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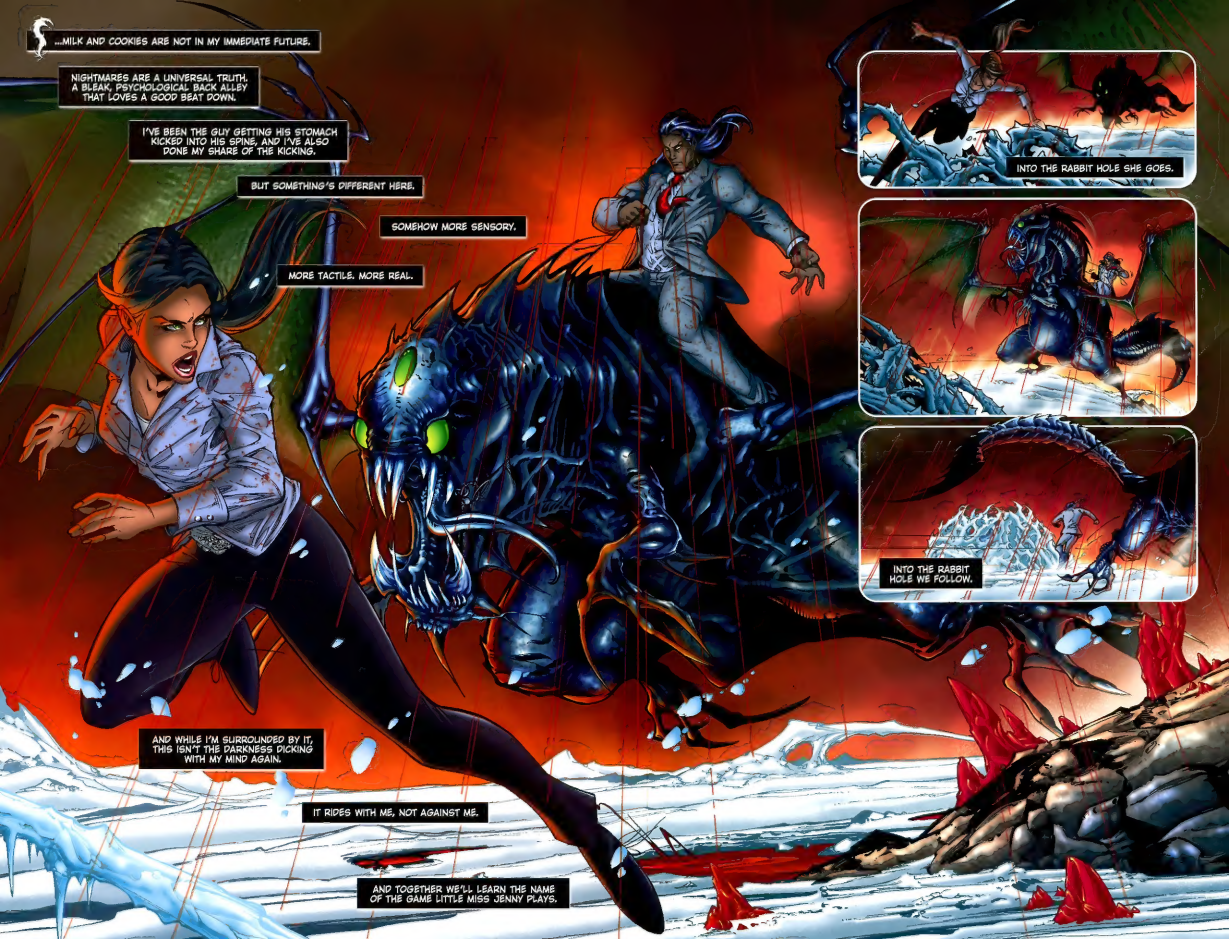
"When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?"

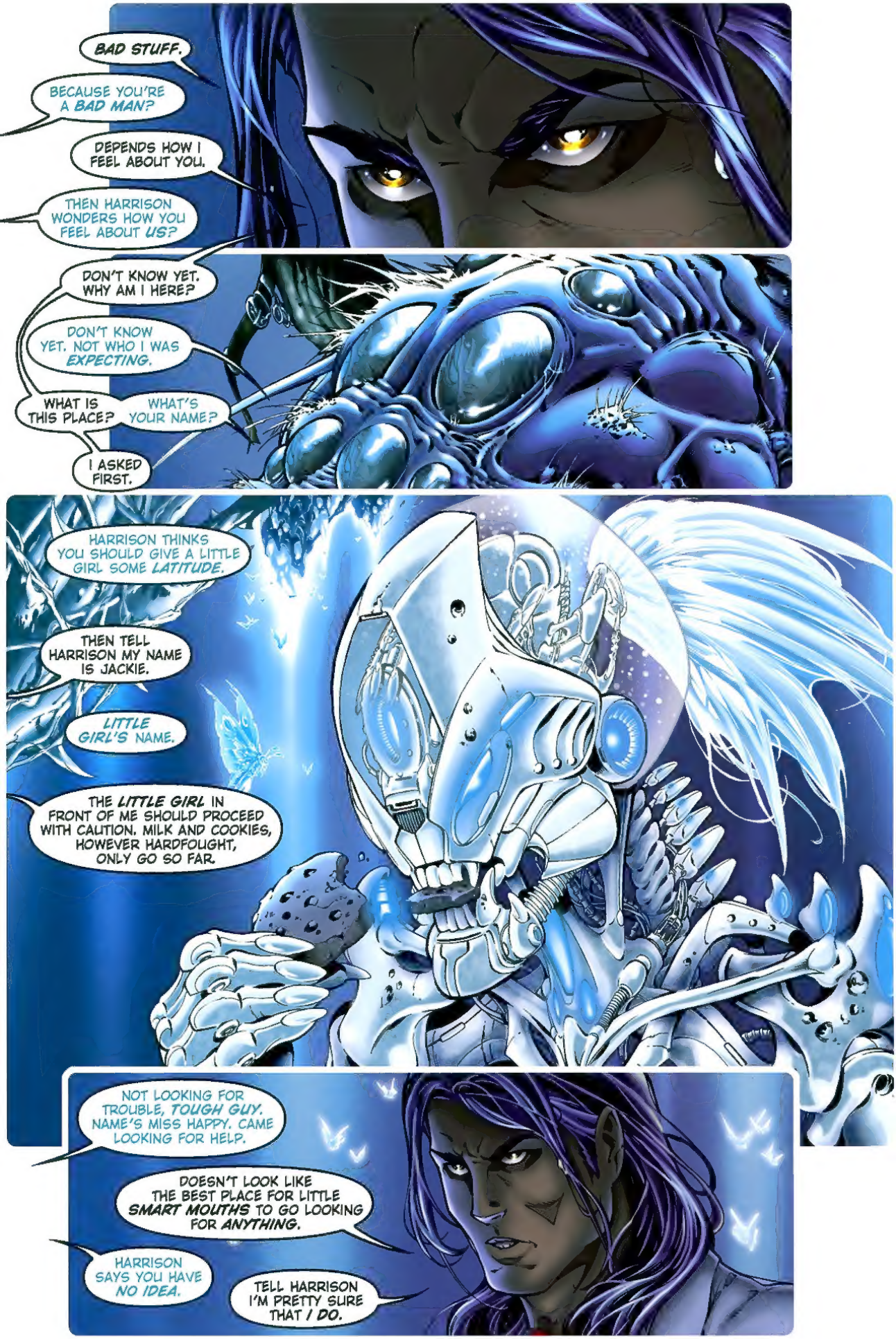
~Macbeth, Shakespeare

HER NAME WAS JENNY, AND SHE WAS REAL EASY TO LOVE.
BUT SINCE JENNY DIED, AND I'M NOT AN IDIOT, THAT CAN'T BE HER AHEAD OF ME.
IT WANTS TO LEAD, AND WANTS ME TO FOLLOW.
IT'S TAKEN THE FORM OF A FRIEND, AND HASN'T ATTACKED, SO I OBLIGE. I FEAR VERY LITTLE THESE DAYS.
BUT SOMETHING ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE AND THE FACT IT'S RAINING BLOOD GIVE IT ALL AWAY...


...MILK AND COOKIES ARE NOT IN MY IMMEDIATE FUTURE.
NIGHTMARES ARE A UNIVERSAL TRUTH. A BLEAK, PSYCHOLOGICAL BACK ALLEY THAT LOVES A GOOD BEAT DOWN.
I'VE BEEN THE GUY GETTING HIS STOMACH KICKED INTO HIS SPINE, AND I'VE ALSO DONE MY SHARE OF THE KICKING.
BUT SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT HERE.
SOMEHOW MORE SENSORY.
MORE TACTILE. MORE REAL.
AND WHILE I'M SURROUNDED BY IT, THIS ISN'T THE DARKNESS DICKING WITH MY MIND AGAIN.
IT RIDES WITH ME, NOT AGAINST ME.
AND TOGETHER WE'LL LEARN THE NAME OF THE GAME LITTLE MISS JENNY PLAYS.
INTO THE RABBIT HOLE SHE GOES.
INTO THE RABBIT HOLE WE FOLLOW.

OKAY... SO I WAS WRONG.
AND THERE SHE WAS. NOT SURE WHAT SURPRISED ME MORE,
THAT SHE GOT THE JUMP ON ME, OR THAT MY JADED HEART WENT OUT TO HER.
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THE PLACE WAS SO PERFECTLY GLOOMY AND SHE REALLY WAS A LITTLE PIECE OF SUNSHINE.
MAYBE I APPRECIATED THE CONTRAST.
JUST TRYING TO BE PLEASANT.
DREAMT I SAW A FRIEND HERE.
SO DID I.
THIS IS HARRISON.
THAT'S SNOW DOME. CALL 'IM THAT BECAUSE OF HIS--
I GET IT.
LOST AN ARM TO THE PENANCE CLAN, BUT I'M CONFIDENT HE COULD STILL KICK YOUR ASS.
DON'T BE.
REAL CHORE AND A MAJOR EFFORT, SO DON'T LEAVE THEM ON THE PLATE. IT'S RUDE.
BESIDES, THE ICE SPIDERS LIKE ME AND THEY'LL TAKE OFFENSE.
TELL ME ABOUT JENNY.
LED YOURSELF HERE. HOW YOU DID IT IS YOUR BUSINESS.
PROBABLY SHOULDN'T WEAR WHITE THIS TIME OF YEAR. RAINS BLOOD.
BUT IT'S AN INTERESTING CONTRAST, AND I APPRECIATE CONTRAST.

IF YOU'VE GOT ANY *TRICKS* IN MIND, YOU SHOULD KNOW I HAVE A *FEW* OF MY OWN.
CONGRATULATIONS. YOU CREATED A LITTLE COOKIE MONSTER.
THEY COME IN *ALL* SIZES.
HARRISON SAYS YOU'RE QUITE THE *ASSASSIN*.
I'VE DROPPED SOME *UNDESIRABLES*. NO ONE THAT DIDN'T DESERVE IT.
SAYS YOU'VE GOT A HERO'S HEART, EVEN IF DRAPED IN SADNESS AND SHADOW... SO HARRISON SAYS I SHOULDN'T WORRY.
MAYBE HARRISON'S GOT IT *WRONG*.
BECAUSE YOU CAN MAKE STUFF OUT OF THE DARK?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
LOTS OF DARK HERE FOR YOU TO MAKE STUFF.


BAD STUFF.
BECAUSE YOU'RE A BAD MAN?
DEPENDS HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU.
THEN HARRISON WONDERS HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT US?
DON'T KNOW YET. WHY AM I HERE?
DON'T KNOW YET. NOT WHO I WAS EXPECTING.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
I ASKED FIRST.
HARRISON THINKS YOU SHOULD GIVE A LITTLE GIRL SOME LATITUDE.
THEN TELL HARRISON MY NAME IS JACKIE.
LITTLE GIRL'S NAME.
THE LITTLE GIRL IN FRONT OF ME SHOULD PROCEED WITH CAUTION. MILK AND COOKIES, HOWEVER HARDFOUGHT, ONLY GO SO FAR.
NOT LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, TOUGH GUY. NAME'S MISS HAPPY. CAME LOOKING FOR HELP.
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THE BEST PLACE FOR LITTLE SMART MOUTHS TO GO LOOKING FOR ANYTHING.
HARRISON SAYS YOU HAVE NO IDEA.
TELL HARRISON I'M PRETTY SURE THAT I DO.

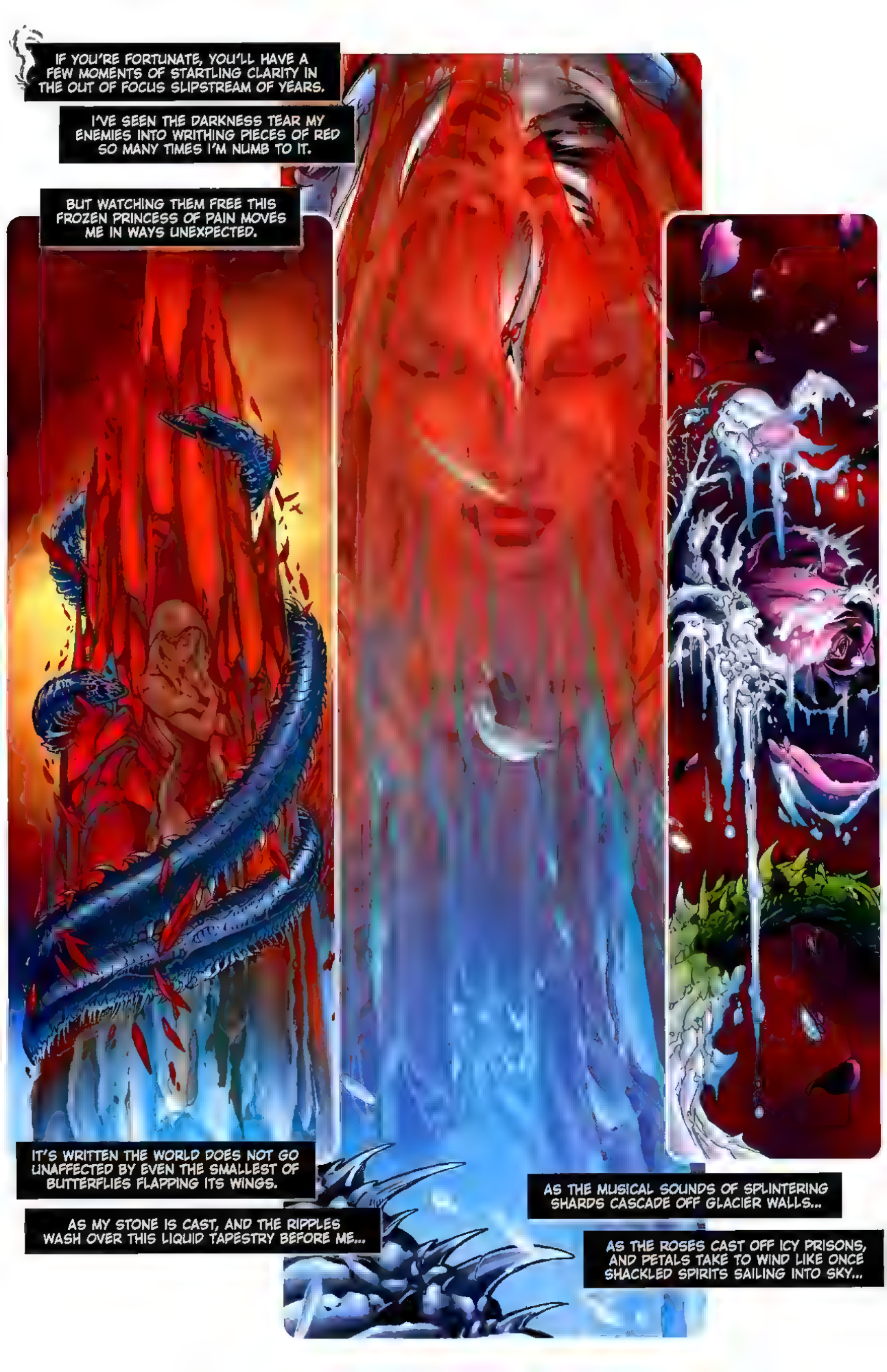
OKAY THEN-- YOU'RE ON THE FROZEN FRAYED EDGE OF NOCTURNAL NATION. A PLACE OF UNTOLD TERRORS GROWN IN THE WET SOIL PROVIDED BY MAN'S ENTERNAL NIGHT TIME PSYCHOSIS...
MADISON, I FOUND HER. ESTIMATED MORSEL TIME, FIVE MINUTES OR LESS.
...AND YOU'RE HAVING A CHAT WITH ONE OF THE FEW BENIGN SOULS IN THE KINGDOM OF NIGHTMARE. KINGDOM PAIN. A GARDEN OF VARIED AND PERPETUAL EVIL --
--ONE THAT CAN TAKE BLOOM IN MY BLOOD, AND IN MY BONES.
SOUNDS SCARY.
YOU SEE, THE BEASTS OF HUMANITY'S BURDENS, THEIR NIGHTMARES? THANKS TO MY MOTHER, I CAN BECOME THEM. ANY OF THEM.
I JUST TAKE MY PICK DEPENDING ON MY MOOD. THEN I SHED MY SKIN. LIKE A SNAKE. AND MONSTERS EMERGE.
ONLY IT'S PAINFUL AND PEOPLE DIE.
SO GET IT STRAIGHT. IT'S THE THING I HATE.
BECAUSE YOU'RE GOOD.
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
INTERESTING CONTRAST.

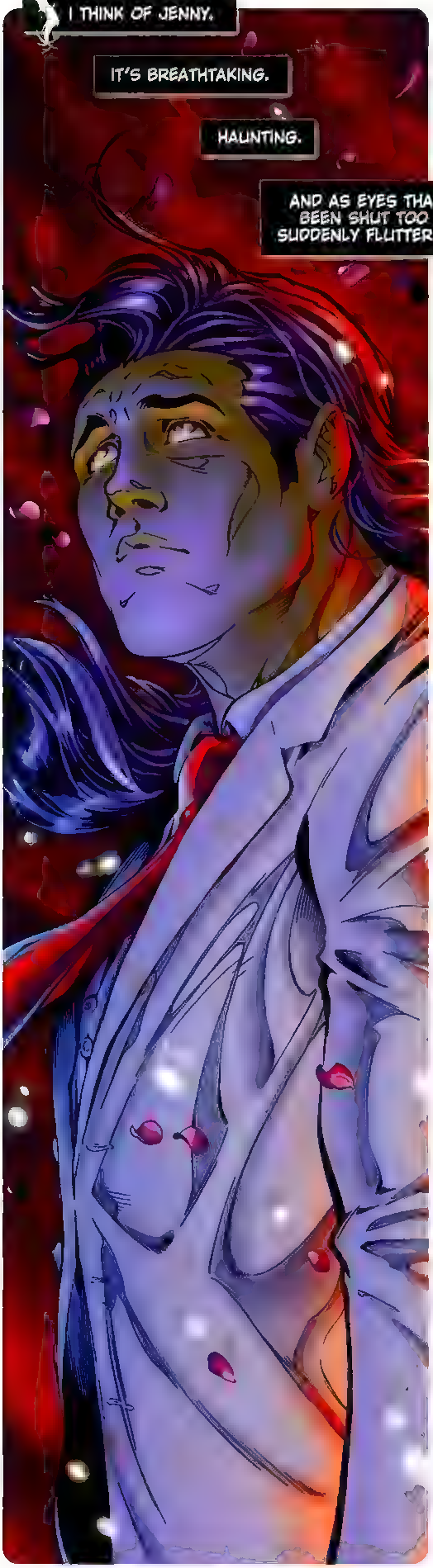
GUESS YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO SIPS FROM THE WELLSPRING OF SHADOW. AND IF YOU'RE REALLY NOT A BAD MAN, THEN I REALLY DO NEED YOUR HELP.
HERE IT COMES.
MAYBE IT WAS THE WAY HER GIANT ALMOND SHAPED EYES SHIMMERED WITH BLUE DESPERATION, BUT THE KID COULD ASK ME TO TAKE A BULLET FOR HER, AND RIGHT NOW? I'D DO IT.
SUNSHINE NEVER WAS MY FRIEND, AND NOW SHE NEEDS A FAVOR. DO TELL.
AINT YOU EVER NEEDED HELP FROM NOBODY?
I NEED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING, BUT WE MUST BE QUICK, AND TREAD LIGHTLY. HORRORS ABOUND.
I'M NOT SCARED.
THEN TAKE A BEAT TO MARVEL AT YOUR OWN EPIC STUPIDITY.
PRECOCIOUS.

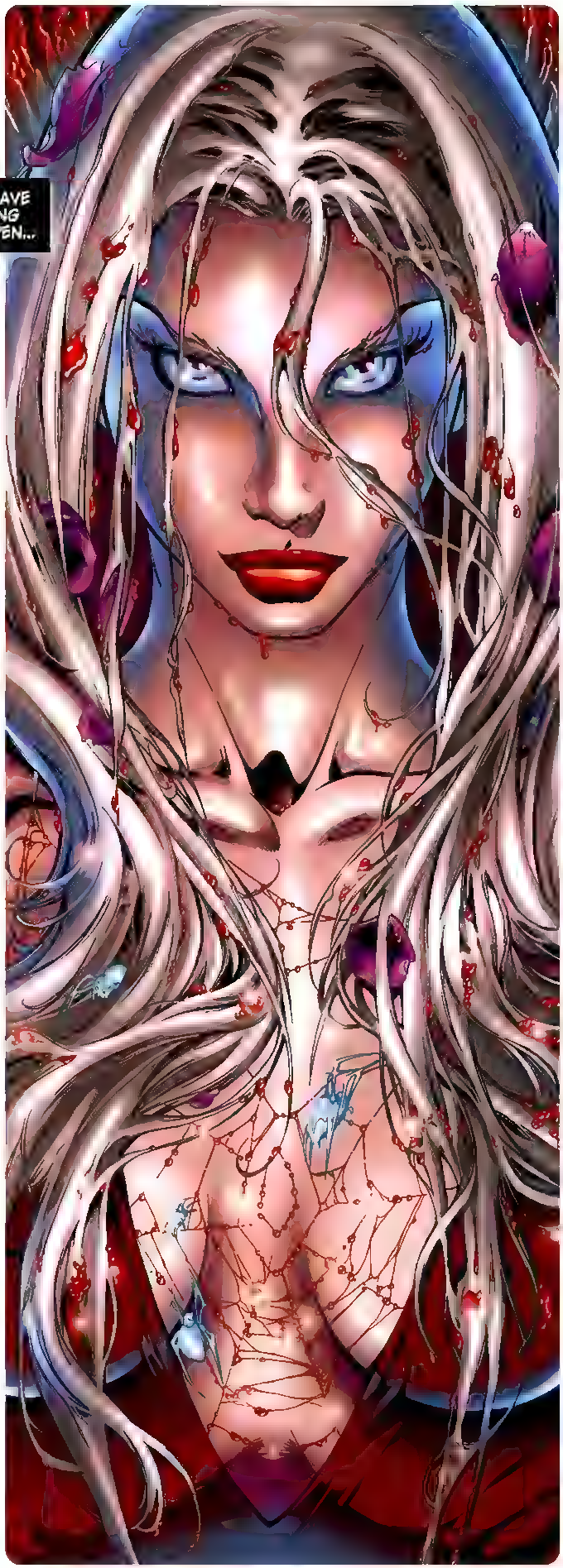
GODDAMN. SHE'S GORGEOUS.
EXCUSE ME! LITTLE GIRL HERE!
SORRY. WHAT AM I LOOKING AT BESIDES AN EXTREMELY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN FROZEN IN BLOOD?
A TRAGIC, SELF FULFILLING CIRCLE.
HER REAL BODY, IN THAT PLACE WHERE THE SUN STILL SHINES... WAS FOUND BY A BURNING JEEP, LEFT FOR DEAD BY HER ENEMIES. AND DESPITE THE AIR THAT STILL RISES AND FALLS IN HER LUNGS... PERHAPS SHE WAS. JANE DOE WITHERS AWAY IN A COUNTRY HOSPITAL ON LIFE SUPPORT.
HER GREATEST FEAR WAS OF BEING LOST. OF HAVING NO ONE LEFT TO LOVE HER.
OF BEING TOO WEAK TO KEEP FIGHTING. OF BEING CONSUMED BY THE EVIL OF NIGHTMARE.
SO GREAT WAS HER SADNESS THAT SHE STOLE HERSELF FROM THE WORLD.
HER WOUNDED MIND CRAWLED AWAY, SEEKING A PLACE TO HEAL AT THE FARTHEST EDGE OF KINGDOM PAIN. A PLACE SHE THOUGHT THEY'D NEVER FIND HER.
AND FOR SEVEN YEARS, IT SHUT DOWN.
THEN A LITTLE SPLINTER BROKE FREE.
A LITTLE SPLINTER WEARING A RED DRESS AND A SPIDER HELMET.
I UNDERSTAND HOW THE WORLD CAN MAKE ONE WEARY. MAYBE SHE'S HAPPY THAT WAY.

ABSENCE DOESN'T ALWAYS EQUATE TO APATHY.
AND SHE'S ONLY MET HAPPY ONCE. HIS NAME WAS PERRY AND THE SISSY NEVER EVEN KISSED HER.
DUMMY.
BUT THIS ISN'T ABOUT WHAT WE WANT. IT'S ABOUT THE GOOD IN US BEING ABLE TO PREVENT A BAD THAT'S COMING. A BAD TOO BIG FOR US ALONE.
WE NEEDED HELP. WE ASKED FOR T. WE CALLED OUT TO THE ONLY OTHER PERSON WE'VE EVER MET WHO WAS ALSO CURSED WITH GREAT POWER...
...SARA PE...
THE WITCHBLADE, FIGURES.
TOOK A LOT OUT OF ME. HAD TO EVADE SOME HUNGRY THINGS WITH BAD SKIN TO GET WHERE I THOUGHT SHE'D BE. NOT SURE WHY YOU SHOWED UP.
SARA AND I ARE... CONNECTED.
YOU GET HER MAIL TOO?
SOMETIMES SHE GETS MINE.
HOW'D THAT ...RN OUT
WE NAMED HER HOPE.
... CREATURES OF COMPLEXITY AREN'T WE, JACKIE?

THINGS GET CRACKED AND BROKEN. IT HAPPENS.
BUT THEY CAN STILL BE BEAUTIFUL AGAIN.
THEN YOU READY TO WAKE UP AND LIVE, KID?
LOTS OF DARK HERE FOR YOU TO MAKE STUFF.
THAT'S RIGHT.
DIDN'T EVEN NEED THE TEAR, KID.
YOU HAD ME WITH THE *DAMN* COOKIES.

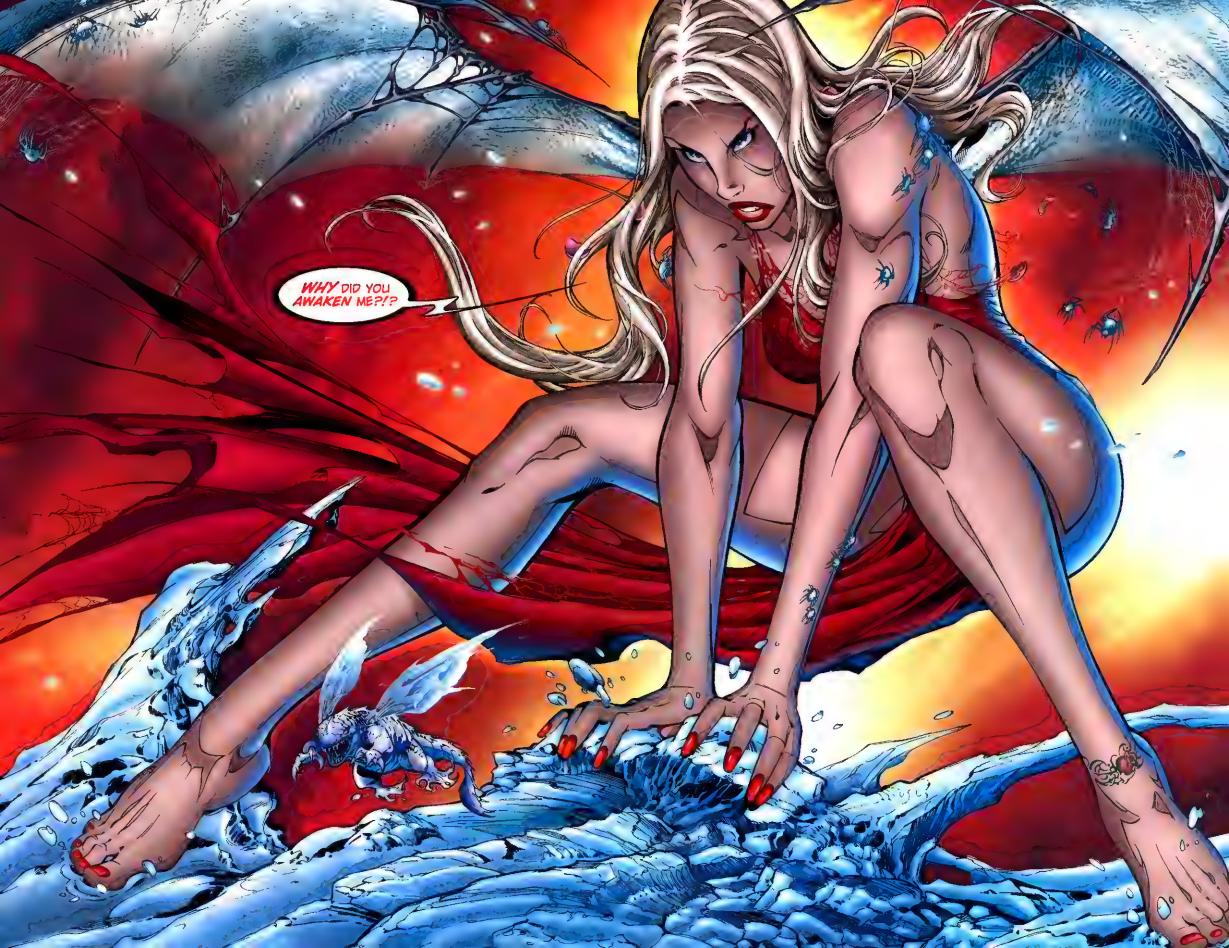

IF YOU'RE FORTUNATE, YOU'LL HAVE A FEW MOMENTS OF STARTLING CLARITY IN THE OUT OF FOCUS SLIPSTREAM OF YEARS.
I'VE SEEN THE DARKNESS TEAR MY ENEMIES INTO WRITHING PIECES OF RED SO MANY TIMES I'M NUMB TO IT.
BUT WATCHING THEM FREE THIS FROZEN PRINCESS OF PAIN MOVES ME IN WAYS UNEXPECTED.
IT'S WRITTEN THE WORLD DOES NOT GO UNAFFECTED BY EVEN THE SMALLEST OF BUTTERFLIES FLAPPING ITS WINGS.
AS MY STONE IS CAST, AND THE RIPPLES WASH OVER THIS LIQUID TAPESTRY BEFORE ME...
AS THE MUSICAL SOUNDS OF SPLINTERING SHARDS CASCADE OFF GLACIER WALLS...
AS THE ROSES CAST OFF ICY PRISONS, AND PETALS TAKE TO WIND LIKE ONCE SHACKLED SPIRITS SAILING INTO SKY...


I THINK OF JENNY.
IT'S BREATHTAKING.
HAUNTING.
AND AS EYES THAT HAVE BEEN SHUT TOO LONG SUDDENLY FLUTTER OPEN...



...IT'S ABSOLUTELY STUNNING.

IT HITS ME I SUDDENLY STAND ALONE.
ONLY A DISCARDED HARRISON MARKS ANY SUNSHINE WAS EVER THERE AT ALL.
THAT...
...AND SOMETHING ELSE.

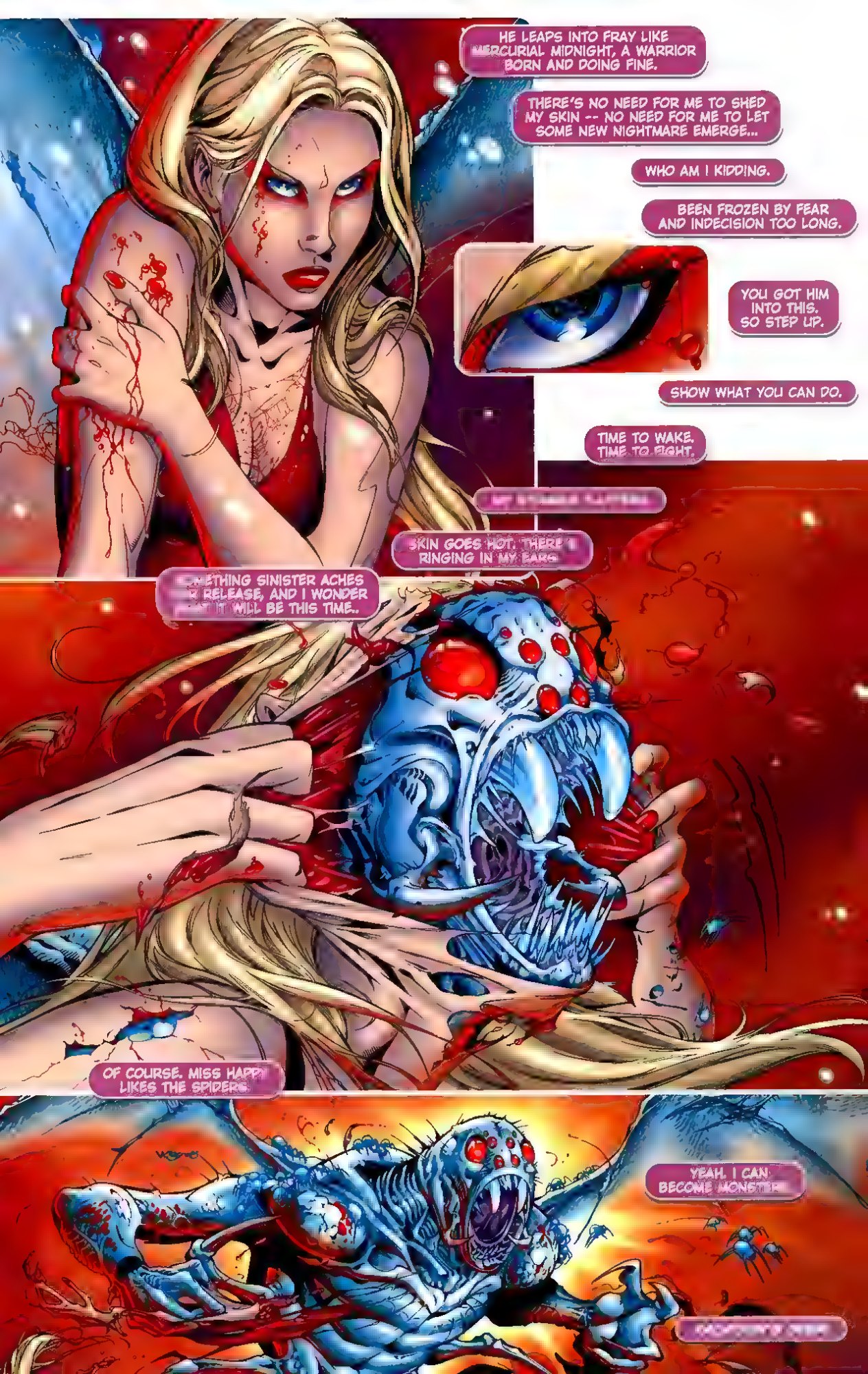

WHY DID YOU AWAKEN ME?!?

HARRISON MADE ME...
...AND PERRY REALLY SHOULD HAVE KISSED YOU.
WAIT. WE'RE IN DANGER...
OF COURSE. HORRORS ABOUND.
NEED A MINUTE TO GET MY... IT'S WHY I CALLED OUT. SOMETHING BESIDES ME AWAKENS.
A MADNESS GATHERS STRENGTH. WHILE SHE'S WEAK, WE HAVE A CHANCE.
SHE?
IF SHE'S ALLOWED TO BECOME... THE WORLD OF THE SUN WILL FALL.
THE GIRL I SHARE A ROOM WITH IN THE COMA WING. MADISON KELLER. HEAD TRAUMA. NOW QUIETLY INFECTED WITH A SENTIENT ALIEN TECH ENTOMBED IN A FOSSIL GIVEN AS A GET WELL GIFT. A DORMANT, UNIMAGINABLE POWER WAS PLACED RIGHT AT HER BEDSIDE. THEN IT WOKE UP.
SOUNDS FAR FETCHED.
CONSIDER WHERE WE'RE HAVING THIS CONVERSATION.
THE SENTIENT IS ADVANCED IN PARTICLE MANIPULATION. IT CAN CREATE FROM IMAGINATION, WHAT IT NEEDS AS A SPECIES...
SORTA TRUMPS WHAT WE CAN DO.
IT CAN CREATE EVERYTHING BUT ITS HOST. IT TRIED TO INFECT ME FIRST, BUT SENSED I WAS.... TAKEN.
IT'S A PEACEFUL INTELLIGENCE, EVOLVED BEYOND MALICE OR ANGER, BUT MADISON ISN'T. SHE'S BUSTED. AND HOPES TO CREATE ENOUGH OF A CRITICAL MASS HERE, THAT IT AWAKENS HER THERE. MENTAL MOLTEN LAVA RISES, ABOUT TO ERUPT FOR ALL TO SEE.
TELLING CHEMICAL LIES, ARIEL?

FEAR THE UNBEARABLE! AND BEHOLD THE BEAUTY OF BREATHTAKER!
STUPID RED SMEARS. THOUGHT YOU WERE A FRIEND. THOUGHT I COULD MEET YOU HERE. SHARE SOME SECRETS.
GUESS YOU THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO WAKE.
GUESS YOU THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO EMERGE FROM DARKNESS.
I GOT SOME FRIENDS DYING TO EMERGE.
WANNA MEET THEM, MADISON?
YOU TWO CAN MAKE MONSTERS. I CAN MAKE ANYTHING... AND I THINK I MAKE YOU STUPID RED SMEARS IN THE SNOW.
YEAH, YOU RESURRECTED THE ISLAND OF MISFIT TOYS.
SHOW ME SOMETHING THAT WORRIES ME!
LOVE TO. AND WHILE MY BRAIN MAY BE BROKEN... YOU'RE IN NEED OF HUMBLING, HANDSOME.
SO EGO... KISS THE MIGHTY ASS OF HUMILITY.

I'D PROBABLY GET ALONG WITH THIS CRAZY BITCH IF SHE WASN'T TRYING TO KILL US.
THIS IS GOING THAT WAY...
OKAY JACKIE. GOOD TIME TO REMEMBER YOU FEAR VERY LITTLE THESE DAYS.
HI HUMILITY...
...MEET EGO.
WHAT TH P!?
FIGURES!
CAME OVER CORRUPTED BY NIGHTMARE. RECONFIGURED BY THIS PLACE SOMEHOW!
STILL FEELS STRONG. FEELS REAL STRONG.
NEVERMIND--

-- I LIKE IT!
IF YOU'RE GONNA DO THAT THING YOU HATE, ARIEL -- NOW'S A REAL GOOD TIME!


HE LEAPS INTO FRAY LIKE MERCURIAL MIDNIGHT, A WARRIOR BORN AND DOING FINE.
THERE'S NO NEED FOR ME TO SHED MY SKIN -- NO NEED FOR ME TO LET SOME NEW NIGHTMARE EMERGE...
WHO AM I KIDDING.
BEEN FROZEN BY FEAR AND INDECISION TOO LONG.
YOU GOT HIM INTO THIS. SO STEP UP.
SHOW WHAT YOU CAN DO.
TIME TO WAKE. TIME TO FIGHT.
SKIN GOES HOT. THERE RINGING IN MY EARS
SOMETHING SINISTER ACHES RELEASE, AND I WONDER IT WILL BE THIS TIME..
OF COURSE. MISS HAPP LIKES THE SPIDERS.
YEAH, I CAN BECOME MONSTER

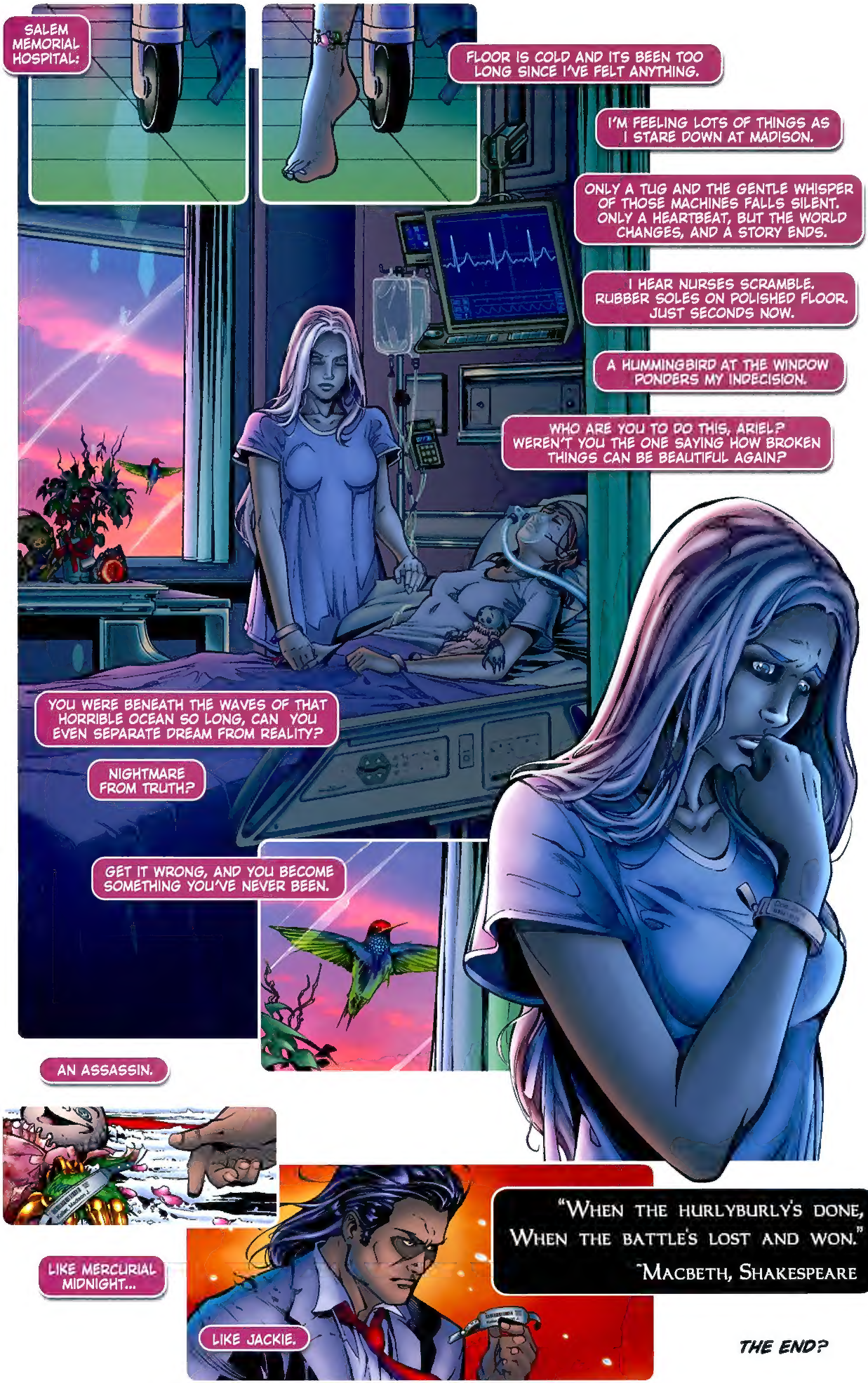
THAT WAS GROSS!
AND EXTREMELY PAINFUL.
THAT PERRY EVER ASK YOU TO PROM?
NO.
THEN DANCE WITH ME.
BOTH OF US ARRIVED HAVING LOST THINGS. TOGETHER WE RECLAIM. TOGETHER WE WIN.
TOGETHER WE TAKE BACK WHAT'S OURS BECAUSE WE'RE WILLING TO SHED THE RED.
AND I'M NOT SURPRISED AT ALL WHEN SKELETONS OF SOLID SHADOW SPRING FROM HIS SPINE.
[illegible]
YOU GET SHRAPNEL IN YOUR STUPID FACE!
SPIDER POISON IN ACRYLIC ARTERIES.
WE SEEM TO MOVE IN SLOW MOTION IN THIS HOWLING EPICENTER OF FRENZIED ETERNITY.
THIS BLUR OF ELEMENTAL SOUND AND [illegible]
MADISON WANTS HER RED SMEARS, AND IF WE'RE NOT FASTER THAN HER SCRAMBLED ID, SHE'LL LIKELY GET THEM.
NO. I DID NOT AWAKEN TO [illegible]
BY HAPPY ACCIDENT, THIS DARKNESS AT MY SIDE, HE DID NOT COME HERE TO FAIL.

THE UNBEARABLE EMITS A SHRIEKING SONIC PULSE--
--WHICH SHATTERS OUR SKELETAL AID.
I'M CLOSE ENOUGH TO LET HIM KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT IT.
STUPID GURL!
BLOOT!
THEY LOOK GREAT AS THEY GO BOOM, BUT THIS BIG THING...
...THIS BIG THING ISN'T BREAKING A SWEAT.
BUT I CAN SEE MADISON IS...

FINALLY. SHE DOESN'T YET POSSESS WHAT SHE NEEDS. AND WE'RE TAXING WHAT SHE HAS. LET JACKIE HANDLE THE EFFECT. I'M ON THE CAUSE. THE ICE SPIDERS THINK NOW'S A GOOD TIME...
...AND I AGREE.
ONLY A SPARK IS NEEDED TO BLAZE. LOVE THOSE GUYS.
THIS IS NOTHING! I WILL RISE AND I WILL BECOME. YOU'RE RED SMEARS! JUST DISTRACTION!
AND IT'S ALL THEY NEED TO BE...
WHA--?!?
SNAP

...SORRY I'M LATE.

SO WE RUN THE BALL, AND YOU MAKE THE TOUCHDOWN, THAT IT?
DON'T BE A JACK-ASSIE. "THANKS" WORKS FINE.
I LIKE YOU BETTER THAT WAY, ARIEL. POPPED TOP DO THE TRICK?
STOPS HER HERE, BUT NOT FROM TRYING AGAIN FROM THERE.
THEN YOU KNOW WHAT YOU GOTTA DO.
YOU GOTTA WAKE AND PULL THE PLUG, SUNSHINE.
SUNSHINE? I REMEMBER YOU. VAGUELY.
BUT YOU DO REMEMBER.
"GOTTA WAKE AND PULL THE PLUG."
MATTER OF FACT WORDS FROM A MAN ACCUSTOMED TO FINDING SUCCINCT SOLUTIONS TO THE THREATS BEFORE HIM.
WORDS THAT HAVE LIKELY KEPT HIM OUT OF HOSPITALS FOR SEVEN YEAR STINTS.
GOTTA WAKE UP. WAKE UP FOR REAL.
LEAVE THEM HERE TO BICKER...


SALEM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL:
FLOOR IS COLD AND ITS BEEN TOO LONG SINCE I'VE FELT ANYTHING.
I'M FEELING LOTS OF THINGS AS I STARE DOWN AT MADISON.
ONLY A TUG AND THE GENTLE WHISPER OF THOSE MACHINES FALLS SILENT. ONLY A HEARTBEAT, BUT THE WORLD CHANGES, AND A STORY ENDS.
I HEAR NURSES SCRAMBLE. RUBBER SOLES ON POLISHED FLOOR. JUST SECONDS NOW.
A HUMMINGBIRD AT THE WINDOW PONDERS MY INDECISION.
WHO ARE YOU TO DO THIS, ARIEL? WEREN'T YOU THE ONE SAYING HOW BROKEN THINGS CAN BE BEAUTIFUL AGAIN?
YOU WERE BENEATH THE WAVES OF THAT HORRIBLE OCEAN SO LONG, CAN YOU EVEN SEPARATE DREAM FROM REALITY?
NIGHTMARE FROM TRUTH?
GET IT WRONG, AND YOU BECOME SOMETHING YOU'VE NEVER BEEN.
AN ASSASSIN.
LIKE MERCURIAL MIDNIGHT...
LIKE JACKIE.
"WHEN THE HURLYBURLY'S DONE, WHEN THE BATTLE'S LOST AND WON."
-MACBETH, SHAKESPEARE
THE END?